

Trade in America
60.

THE
General Opposition
OF THE
COLONIES
TO THE

Payment of the Stamp Duty;

AND THE
Consequence of Enforcing Obedience
by Military Measures ;

IMPARTIALLY CONSIDERED.

ALSO

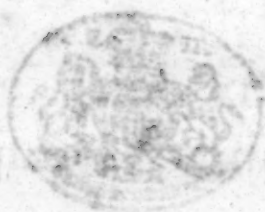
A Plan for uniting them to this Kingdom,
in such a manner as to make their Inter-
est inseparable from ours, for the future.

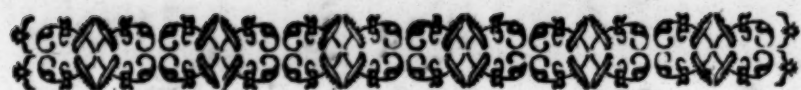
In a LETTER
To a MEMBER of PARLIAMENT.

L O N D O N :
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T H E
General Opposition
O F T H E
C O L O N I E S
T O T H E
Payment of the Stamp Duty, &c.

TH E General Opposition of
our Colonies to the Stamp
Duty has been, for some Time
past, so much the common Topic
of conversation, and so lately re-
commended by his Majesty to the
consideration of his Parliament,

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that

that I cannot suppose, but you, who are of that Body, and have the Interest of your Country sincerely at heart, are by this Time thoroughly informed in a Matter of so very great Importance.

You Sir, who know I have no kind of Property in any of our Colonies, nor connection with any Family that has, may possibly wonder why I should take the trouble of writing on a Subject I am so little interested in; yet when I consider, that a speculative private Person may possibly be of some Service to his Country, by delivering his Sentiments to the public with candour and impartiality on so interesting an Event, I cannot

cannot help thinking my Time well employed.

I should imagine there is no one in this Country so absurd, to controvert the Legality of an Act of Parliament, though many perhaps may wish, sincerely, the late Stamp Duty had not been appointed; and it were to be wished also, that there could be any room to doubt the general Opinion of the Colonies in this Point. Their unanimous Behaviour on the occasion, and the Remonstrances of several of their Assemblies, sufficiently declare they do not admit that the Parliament of *England* has any right to tax them without their consent. Although the leading
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Persons generally disavow all riotous Measures of Opposition.

The Charters of several of the Colonies have been lately published at large in our News Papers ; by which it appears, that their Privileges are not greater than have been granted to some of our Cities and Corporations, as *London*, for instance, which has its Upper and Lower House, that is, its Courts of Aldermen and Common Council, who have Power to make Laws and levy Taxes within their Jurisdiction, and are notwithstanding subject to the general Taxation of Parliament, which is levied for the Maintainance and Defence of the whole State : of which our Colonie

nies have lately received so large a portion, that I am afraid the Sin of Ingratitude will be added to the crime of opposing the Legislature on this Occasion.

The close Affinity of a Kingdom to its Colonies is expressed among us by the endearing Terms of Mother and Children. The Infant Colony is nursed with Tenderness by its Mother Country, which supplies all its Wants ; assists its Weakness ; watches over, and guards it from impending Dangers ; and is ever ready to shed its Blood in its defence. From this fond attention and care, the Appellation of *Mother Country* is given to us by our Colonies, as that of *Father*

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Land is to *Holland*. I cannot account for the Distinction, unless it be from a more strict Obedience required by the *Dutch*, from their Colonies, which is generally insisted on more strenuously by a Father, than a Mother.

The Appellation, however, of Parent and Children holds equally with each ; but as ours have been nursed by a fond Mother, they may possibly have been spoiled by extraordinary Indulgence ; and as in private Families, it is too late to correct Errors by chastisement, when the Child is past the Discipline of the Rod ; the Mother is then obliged to apply to the Father's Assistance, who, if he is actuated

tuated by Passion, may perhaps knock him down if he persists in Disobedience, or offers at Resistance ; but if he considers the Matter coolly, he may conclude that such violent Measures will inevitably drive him into evil courses, which may possibly end in the Ruin of the whole Family.

The wisest, and perhaps the only certain Means of endearing a Son truly to a Father, is to give him a proper share of his Fortune, and also in the Management of the Family concerns, when he comes to Maturity. He will then undoubtedly consider his Father's Interest and his own as the same, and will consequently spare no Labour, nor

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grudge any Expence, when the Benefits to arise become mutual.

The comparison of Colonies to Children holds in many Particulars. In their Infancy they must be nourished ; as they increase in Strength they become impatient of controul ; and when arrived to Maturity, they will certainly endeavour at Independence. Yet by wise and proper Management, I should imagine, they might be indulged sufficiently, and still be of greater Benefit to the Mother Country, than if kept in abject Submission.

Our Colonies have been hitherto, except in the late Instance, untaxed by *England*. The Duties laid on their Commodities on Importation

tion cannot properly be deemed a Tax on them; for when we are the consumers, it is certainly a Tax on ourselves.

The Goods we send to them are chiefly of *British* Manufacture, and bring us in return whatever they can acquire for our Use, whether the natural Produce of their Country, or obtained by cultivation of the Soil, which is of greater Value to this Kingdom in that shape, than if made in Bars of Gold or Silver, as it employs our Manufacturers in working up these rough Materials; and also requires a proportionable Quantity of Shipping and Sailors to carry them, which enables us to preserve our Dominion on that Element, where

alone we should ever endeavour to be formidable.

It may be alledged, however, by some sanguine Advocate for the Passive Obedience and Non-resistance of our Colonies, that notwithstanding all this, we are not to suffer them, on any account whatsoever, to oppose any Tax imposed on them by the Parliament of *England*. — That if we give up or suffer the least Abatement of the Tax in question, we acknowledge them to be independent. — That we have expended Millions on their account, and they ought, and must be compelled to submit to such a share of the Burthen as we shall think proper to lay on them. I shall very readily agree
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o this Determination, provided it can be executed with Safety and Prudence ; but a calm considerate Person will always examine seriously the Obstacles, as well as the Advantages that may occur in the Execution of any violent Measure, before he engages deeply in it.

Let us suppose the best Issue that can be reasonably expected.—That the Payment of the Tax is compelled without Bloodshed ; and the People of the Colonies only so generally dissatisfied, that they resolve unanimously to purchase no Commodities from us that they can possibly do without ; and also endeavour by Industry, and mutual Assistance, to supply each other with such Necessaries, however coarsely manu-

manufactured at the beginning, as can be produced among them. This would be a real Loss to this Kingdom, by a Diminution of its usual Export Manufactures, probably to more than treble the Amount of the expected Produce of the Stamp Duty.

It may be conjectured that Persons of Fortune in that Part of the World, are generally so profuse and luxurious, that there is no probability of their applying themselves seriously to the cultivation and encouragement of Arts and Manufactures ; or refraining from the means of indulging their Luxury on any account. — I do allow there may be some grounds for a conjecture of the kind ; but still
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the Experiment is too dangerous ; for there is no determining positively, how far Pique or Resentment may lead People to Temperance and Frugality, or incite them to Labour and Industry ; especially when the Advantages attendant on the proper Encouragement of their own Manufactures must soon be very evident ; and the Materials requisite to most Branches may be acquired by common Industry, in so very extensive a Country.

As I have endeavoured to shew the Consequences of obliging our Colonies to submit to the Stamp Duty without Bloodshed ; it may be proper also to consider the dangers that may be apprehended from

compelling the Execution of this Law by Force of Arms.

I shall so far agree with the martial disposition of those who declare for warlike Measures in the first Instance, — that if this Kingdom should think proper to exert its full Power, the united Power of the Colonies could not possibly withstand it. But I must own I am not quite so valiant as to join those warlike Spirits, who declare they desire but ten thousand of our Regular Troops, to drive all the Colonies before them. True, there is no great Danger in the boldest Declaration, at three thousand Miles distance from an Enemy ; but still a calm considerate Person, who

who may be valiant enough also on a proper occasion, may reflect, that the Number of People in our Colonies amount, by computation, to between two and three Millions at the least. That a twentieth Part of these may be deemed fencible Men.— That one half at least of these are able bodied, and may be resolute and determined. — That they may be enthusiastically misled to imagine they fight for Liberty, which is a Spirit not easily suppressed in an *Englishman*. I say supposing this calculation to be tolerably exact, he may expect to find sixty or seventy thousand able-bodied Men, who may be mad enough to have determined absolutely on Opposition.

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This Number of Opponents, it is certain cannot well be collected into one Body, and they are to be divided among the Colonies; we may go in a Body against any one of them we think proper; yet still however, as these People have a thorough knowledge of the country, and are inured to the climate, although perhaps they dare not face us in the Field, might give us a great deal of Trouble in marching after them thro' Woods and Mountains. Besides they may probably have learned the *Indian* method of Bush-fighting, which must be very tedious, and somewhat troublesome to our Regulars. The Reduction of each Colony would by this means be retarded;
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and we might possibly lose a few Men by Sicknefs, or Fatigue, tho' not by fair fighting. And as we must also leave a fufficient Force in each, to keep them in proper Obedience after we have conquered them, or we may have the fame work to do over again, I fhould imagine that after bringing three or four of the moft obftinate into a proper State of Subjection, we fhould perceive our Numbers fomewhat diminifhed, and poffibly find by that time there had been fome fmall miftake in the calculation.

It were great pity fo hopeful a Scheme fhould mifcarry on account of a trifling Error in calculation ; efpecially when any miftake, as to the number of Soldiers that may be neceffary, can

easily be remedied, and a sufficient quantity had upon very easy Terms. Let us consider what a number of Manufacturers are now employed in different Works for the Colonies, who will then be out of all Employment, and must either enlist as Soldiers, or starve. Besides, there can be no want of Shipping for Transports, at a very easy rate; as our *West India* Traders will have no other Business. So that with the Help of fifty or sixty Men of War and Frigates, properly stationed along their very extensive Coasts, to hinder them from any Supplies, I make no doubt but in ten or twelve Years at farthest, we shall either conquer their stubborn Spirits,

rits, or extirpate them absolutely; and it is not to be presumed that any of our Neighbours, during that time, will be so rude to interrupt us in our Business. But, as I must own myself a meer Novice in these matters, I shall leave the farther Discussion of them to the Advocates for military Measures.

It is agreed by all the Lawyers in this Kingdom, that the Opposition to the Stamp Duty is illegal, because it is contrary to an Act of Parliament. But as the consideration of this Matter seems to be of too extensive a Nature to be confined within the narrow limits of *Westminster* Hall, and is under the cognizance of a Court, where Law
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and Reason are equally weighed ; any Plea the Colonists can offer in Excuse, or Justification, will certainly be examined with the greatest Candour and Impartiality.

It is inherent to the Liberty of an *Englishman*, and the Basis on which his Property is fixed, that his Freehold, of 40 Shillings *per Annum* value in Land, cannot be taxed without his consent.

That according to the Constitution of this Kingdom, this consent is transferred by the Majority of Freeholders within certain Districts, to such Persons as they choose to represent them.

That the whole of this Kingdom is divided into such Districts, and that every Freeholder of 40
 1 Shillings

Shillings *per Annum* has an undoubted right to vote for a Representative in some one of them.

That the consent of a Majority of the Representatives so elected in the several Districts, undoubtedly implies the consent of the Freeholders of *England*.

On the other hand it is most certain, that no Freeholder of 40 Shillings, or even 400*l. per Annum* in any of our Colonies, will be admitted to vote for a Representative for any County in this Kingdom, in right of such Freehold. Nor will a Freehold Estate, of 10,000 *l. per Annum* there, qualify him to represent any County, or even the poorest Borough in *England*.

A Lawyer

A Lawyer however will tell you very gravely, that the Charters of *Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, &c.* which constitute these Governments Tenants of his Majesty's Manor of *East Greenwich* within the County of *Kent*, in free and common Soccage, do, by virtue of that Tenure, subject their Estates there, as *English* Property within the County of *Kent*, to such Taxes as the Parliament of *England* think proper. But, that this Freehold Property, not being really any where in this Kingdom, cannot possibly give the Owner a right to vote for a Representative in any County, or qualify him to represent any County or Borough in *England*.

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All this may certainly be Common Law, but it will be very difficult to reconcile it to common Sense : for by the same kind of reasoning, they must certainly be liable to the Land Tax, and every other Tax the County of *Kent* is subject to. And as these Governments are, by construction of Law, within the Manor of *East Greenwich*, and liable to be taxed on that account, it must certainly be a great ease to that Manor, to share the Burthen with their Brethren of *East Greenwich* in *America*.

The long uninterrupted *Custom* or *Usage* in the Colonies, of taxing themselves by Representatives of their own choosing ; and also the *Non-usage* of the *British* Parliament

liament in that particular, seems a kind of possessory Right, which might naturally induce Persons, perhaps not thoroughly acquainted with the Nature and Constitution of our Parliament, to imagine the sole right of laying Taxes, belonged to themselves. Which may be a kind of Plea in excuse of their Opposition, however insufficient it may be deemed in point of Law.

If the Colonies could have had but a little Patience, and not oppose the Stamp Act, it must, in a very short Time, have executed itself ;— I mean as *felo de se*. For the Admiralty Courts erected there, —I suppose *according to Law*, and the *English Guarda Costa's*, had so absolutely prevented any clande-

fine dealing with the *Spaniards*, by which means only they have been hitherto enabled to pay the Ballance of their Trade to *England* in Dollars chiefly, that in one Year they must have been left without a Shilling in Specie, and the Stamp Officers obliged, by necessity, to take Paper Currency in Payment for Stamps ; or else *Wood's* Halfpence, which had been rejected in *Ireland*, and shipped off as convicts to the Plantations. It is certain however, that in case of any Rupture with *Spain*, we need not be at the Expence of a Fleet to convoy our Treasure Ships home from the Colonies, as they are obliged to do in Time of War, which may be reckoned some saving

in our account of Expences on that head.

I am far from searching for any fault in the conduct of the late Ministry, and wish I could give any good Reason for their preventing all Traffic with the *Spaniards*, as a previous Measure to their intended Stamp Duty : or why this Duty, which was so very cautiously laid in *England* in the Beginning, that it did not amount to 50,000*l.* *per Ann.* at most, though since, by several Additions, increased to 300,000 *l.* should, in the first Instance of any kind of Tax, be laid on the Colonies with all its Weight at once. But it is to be hoped the Legislature may still apply so healing a Balsam to this Wound,

Wound, that there will be no danger of its breaking out afresh hereafter.

I have already considered our Colonies as Children, easily held in Leading Strings whilst in their Infancy ; but now they are grown to Maturity, they should be held by stronger Bands ; I mean those of mutual Friendship, and reciprocal Advantage. Without which no obligations of Gratitude on account of former care and tenderness ; no coercive Power, however properly employed, can possibly insure a more than temporary Acquiescence. For whenever there is sufficient Power, or opportunity to shake off Dependence, I fear there is no other hold to be relied

lied on than that of strong Interest.

There never has been any State, perhaps, in like circumstances with ours, from whence proper Examples might be taken for our conduct on the present Occasion. The *Roman* Colonies were planted in conquered Countries, not in uncultivated foreign climates, nor at a great Distance from their own Dominions. Arms, not Commerce, was the chief Employment of that warlike People; and the Dominion of the Sea, where there was no Enemy to cope with after the Destruction of *Carthage*, was an object of little consideration.

As our Situation is singular, we must apply to Reason, to Justice,
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and to found Policy on the present Occasion. *Britons*, in whatever Part of the Globe they are established, will never be willingly obedient to Laws they have not, in some manner, consented to ; and of all Laws, those by which we are taxed are soonest generally felt. It is evident the present Opposition of the Colonies is principally founded on their not having consented in any shape to that Law, by which they have been lately taxed. And although superior Force, or the apprehension of it, may possibly compel their Obedience, any other effectual Method must still be undoubtedly preferable.

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To keep our Colonies in proper Obedience to our Laws, to fix their Liberties on the same solid Foundation with our own ; to preserve their Properties inviolably, and by these means to secure their friendship as Brethren equally interested ; can only be effected by thoroughly incorporating them with this Kingdom, and by that means every Benefit that can be reasonably hoped for, on either side, may, to all human appearance, be effectually obtained.

If every Colony were to choose such Representatives as they should think proper, as our Counties in *England* do, and that such Representatives were in every respect
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to have the same Privileges as our Members for Counties ; they would then be on an equal footing. But as some of the Colonies are vastly superior to others in extent, and number of Inhabitants, it may be proper that they should return a greater number of Representatives, and the lesser Colonies in Proportion, so that each might be properly represented, and the Interest of the whole properly attended to in Parliament, by the Persons themselves should think best qualified for that purpose.

As it may be inconvenient to have the Elections for Members to represent a Colony, carried on in the same manner as for a County in *England* ; and as it may be

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necessary

necessary for each Colony to have their Houses of Assembly, as at present, to provide for Occurrences that may happen relative to themselves ; such Houses of Assembly may still remain. And as the several Members that constitute these Houses of Assembly are elected in the several Districts of the Colony, the whole Body may then elect, from among themselves, such Representatives, as the Majority of such Houses of Assembly shall think most proper to represent the Colony in the Parliament of *England*.

I should imagine that by this Method all confusion may be avoided, and no great alteration appear in their Mode of Government. By
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the same Method all our Colonies would be properly represented in Parliament, and their Interest equally attended to as that of any Part of *England*. And by being thus incorporated with this Kingdom, our Union must become inseparable, and our Strength united on all Occasions. The Colonies could no more be looked upon with a jealous Eye; there could be no apprehension of their becoming too rich, or powerful. The constant intercourse which the sending Representatives to Parliament must necessarily create; and the acquaintance and alliance it would naturally produce, must, beyond all doubt, be equally advantageous to all Parties.

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Nothing certainly can be more equitable, than our Colonies bearing some part of the Expence of maintaining a sufficient Force in that part of the World, for their Defence. There can be no Objection offered, with any colour of Reason, to a Tax being levied for this purpose, but their not being represented by Persons elected by themselves, to give their consent to a Law of the kind; for the pretence of any immunity, by Charter, can have no weight. And if they are to be taxed as *Englishmen*, by Laws made in *England*, it will not perhaps be deemed unreasonable, that as Freemen, as Freeholders, they should have a liberty of Election,

Election, as every Freeholder in *Great Britain* of 40s. *per ann.* has.

What the Wisdom of the Legislature may determine in this matter, no one can pretend to say. But there can be no doubt but its Justice will redress any real grievance the Colonies can be deemed to labour under. So far is it from being thought derogatory to its dignity, by that great Assembly, to recede from any former resolution, as some very zealous Persons imagine, that the altering,—amending,—or repealing Laws, as circumstances require, are equally the objects of its attention, as the enacting new ones. The late instance of repealing the *Jew Bill*, the next Sessions after it was enacted by the
 same

same Parliament, is a recent example of the highest impartiality with respect to former opinion. It is therefore to be hoped, that every rational Objection may still be removed, and that the Opposition to the Stamp Duty, instead of producing the unhappy effects the enemies to the Peace and Prosperity of this Nation so ardently wish, may become the happy means of uniting us as *Englishmen*, — as Freemen, equally bound to support and maintain the Laws and Liberties of this Kingdom.

I have, in this manner, taken the Liberty to give you my Sentiments on this very interesting and important Subject ; and also to offer the outlines of a plan for uniting

the Colonies to this Kingdom, in such a manner as to make our Interests and theirs inseparable for the future. I don't pretend it to be entirely my own Invention, and in that respect differ from most Projectors, who consider the Honour of the Invention as a principal Object ; and on that account generally reject what they can't pass for their own. The chief Merit of this, however, is founded on its having been thought of, and mentioned by many ; which I must own is a strong inducement to me, to think it reasonable, and feasible. Upon the whole, if you should approve it, I don't know any one more likely to finish and place it in a proper light, let
 who

who will be the Inventor ; and I
 may certainly hope for your Ap-
 probation, if nothing preferable
 should offer on the Occasion. If
 that should happen, I assure you,
 whatever Prejudice I may be sup-
 posed to have for this, I shall sin-
 cerely wish you may find sufficient
 reason to reject it on that account ;
 and am,

SIR, &c.

